01916

1968/01/30

2C

9

January 30, 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR GENERAL WHEELER:

I feel I owe you an explanation in writing of the precise circumstances surrounding the telephone call to MACV and General Westmoreland this morning from the Situation Room.

At 5:30 Art McCafferty and Bob Ginsburgh were looking over the information available on the situation in Vietnam. They became concerned that we had no additional material beyond that which had been shown to the President at midnight. They decided that, in order to assure the President we were attempting to get more information and to save time, they would personally call the MACV Duty Officer for a report. As the call was being placed, the President telephoned down from his bedroom. In answer to his query as to why we did not have more information, he was informed that we were attempting to call MACV at that time.

The first person with whom Art talked was General Westmoreland's aide. The aide asked if he wouldn't like to speak personally with General Westmoreland. Art replied that he would not want to disturb the General and would prefer to talk to the Duty Officer. He was then transferred to the MACV COC, where he talked to the Colonel on duty. After about five minutes, the Colonel informed Art that General Westmoreland had just walked into the center and would like to speak with the person in the White House. It was at that point that the conversation was held with General Westmoreland.

At no time was there any intent to disturb General Westmoreland who, we understand quite well, is a very busy man, especially in situations as we had last evening. The intent was to be certain that we could assure the President that he was receiving the best and latest information on the situation.

I know well that – at a time like now – the field commander is the man at the wheel.

/s/ Walt
W. W. Rostow

AMcC:jjs

Dispatched 1/30/68 Outside Left.